

## **Legal Information Institute Update**

### **Background**

- Established with a \$250,000 multi-year startup grant from the National Center for Automated Information Research
- A collaboration of Co-Directors and Co-Founders Martin and Bruce
- An activity of the Cornell Law School rather than an outside consulting or publishing enterprise or a multi-institution entity (like CALI)
- Aims:
  - ◆ “To connect the full resources of the school with the legal profession, with other law schools, with the world” – outreach or publication goals quite similar to those underlying a good number of past and present law school activities
  - ◆ To carry out applied research on the use of digital information technology in the distribution of legal information, the delivery of legal education, and the practice of law
  - ◆ To carry out these activities in partnership with though not under the control or direction of such other key actors as law firms, bar associations, public law making and applying bodies, commercial publishers, and other academic institutions
- Premise:
  - ◆ That revolutionary changes in information technology have opened new opportunities for law schools of Cornell’s stature and strength – opportunities to do directly what had previously been dependent on intermediaries (commercial publishers) or blocked by barriers of distance and cost
  - ◆ That the very developments which hold these opportunities also pose a serious threat to the long-term strength and autonomy of law schools that fail to respond to them

### **Accomplishments of the Startup Years (1992-1996)**

- Establishing the foundation
  - ◆ Technology – Created the first law site on the Net and the first Windows-based Web browser (Cello)
  - ◆ Content, Information Architecture and Delivery Strategies – Established high standards of format and functionality for basic law document and collection types, now widely emulated and implemented by others on the Net and on disk, and built a core collection useful to a wide audience
  - ◆ Audience – Brought an immense and diverse national and international audience into a relationship with and awareness of the Cornell Law School
  - ◆ Working Relationships – Secured sponsorship and joint study funding from all the major law publishers, cooperation from some of the public institutions whose output we had begun to distribute, and serious involvement on the part of various constituencies making use of LII products and services (e.g., teachers of high school and college courses dealing with law)

### **The Present Years – Scaling Up to Keep Pace with Use, Learning from Constituencies (Old and New), Plotting a Distinct Course in a Rapidly Changing Environment**

- Holding and learning from our audiences
  - ◆ Moving from an experimental to a production standard of reliability and performance
  - ◆ Avoiding overreaching or building what cannot be sustained
  - ◆ Dropping or cutting back on functions ably assumed by others (e.g., the Directory of Legal Academia)
  - ◆ Drawing faculty and students into the process
- Current products and services (impact, source, and maintenance)

- ◆ Web-based legal information – Over 2.25 million hits a week, spread over a collection both broad and deep
- ◆ Disk-based products (both downloadable and on CD-ROM) – CD-ROM Collection of Historic Decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court (now in its 3d edition, used in many high schools and colleges), American Legal Ethics Library (a new and important resource resulting from a unique cooperative authorship arrangement bringing together private law firms, bar associations, a major malpractice insurer, and law school faculty), and a collection of core statutes, codes, and treaties (from the U.C.C. and Federal Rules of Evidence to the GATT, all downloadable in several formats from the LII website)
- ◆ E-mail delivered case notes – Anchored by the liibulletin which goes out to more than 19,000 direct subscribers and many more others by redistribution, but also including two student-prepared bulletins, liibulletin-ny (covering the New York Court of Appeals) and liibulletin-patent (soon to appear)
- ◆ An Internet-based law course offered to students at other institutions – Martin's Copyright and Digital Works course, now in its third year, and offered to students at Colorado, Kansas, Chicago-Kent as well as Cornell is unique in the law school world and places Cornell Law School in nearly all discussions of the pedagogical, policy, and economic issues raised by distance learning
- ◆ Relationships –
  - ◆ LEXIS (more recently Matthew Bender) and Harvard Law School (the LII, through Bruce, is coordinating a major multi-media project that draws upon seven members of the Harvard Law School faculty)
  - ◆ NYSBA (the LII has created and now maintains resource pages on the Web for many of the New York State Bar Association sections)
  - ◆ New York Court of Claims (the LII has begun a major project under contract with the court that contemplates creation of a decision database that will serve its judges and clerks as well as those who appear before them and a system that will automate its ongoing maintenance)
  - ◆ the U.S. Supreme Court (as the unofficial Web site of the U.S. Supreme Court, the LII has achieved a close working relationship with the staff of the Court)
  - ◆ law firms, bar associations, and others involved in the creation and distribution of the American Legal Ethics Library
  - ◆ the U.S. Peace Corps (responsible for the technology component of the Lawyers for Africa program and backup resource for the Zambian Legal Information Institute, home of the first comprehensive digital law collection in southern Africa)
  - ◆ Colorado, Kansas, Chicago-Kent law schools (the institutions participating in the LII's Internet course) plus many others interested in that path breaking project
  - ◆ Harvard Law Library and the Ames Foundation (Nuremberg digital library project and Bracton on-line)

## Future Plans and Challenges

- Three year plan to explore integrated editorial and software strategies for facilitating the use and understanding of law materials by inexperienced researchers – including students, professionals from other fields heavily touched by law, lawyers and judges from outside the U.S., and ordinary citizens
- Achieving the financial and institutional support that will secure the future of this truly unique activity, ideally at Cornell Law School, beyond the years of active involvement by its two founders